MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!

DOCTOR STRANGE

MARVEL COMICS GROUP

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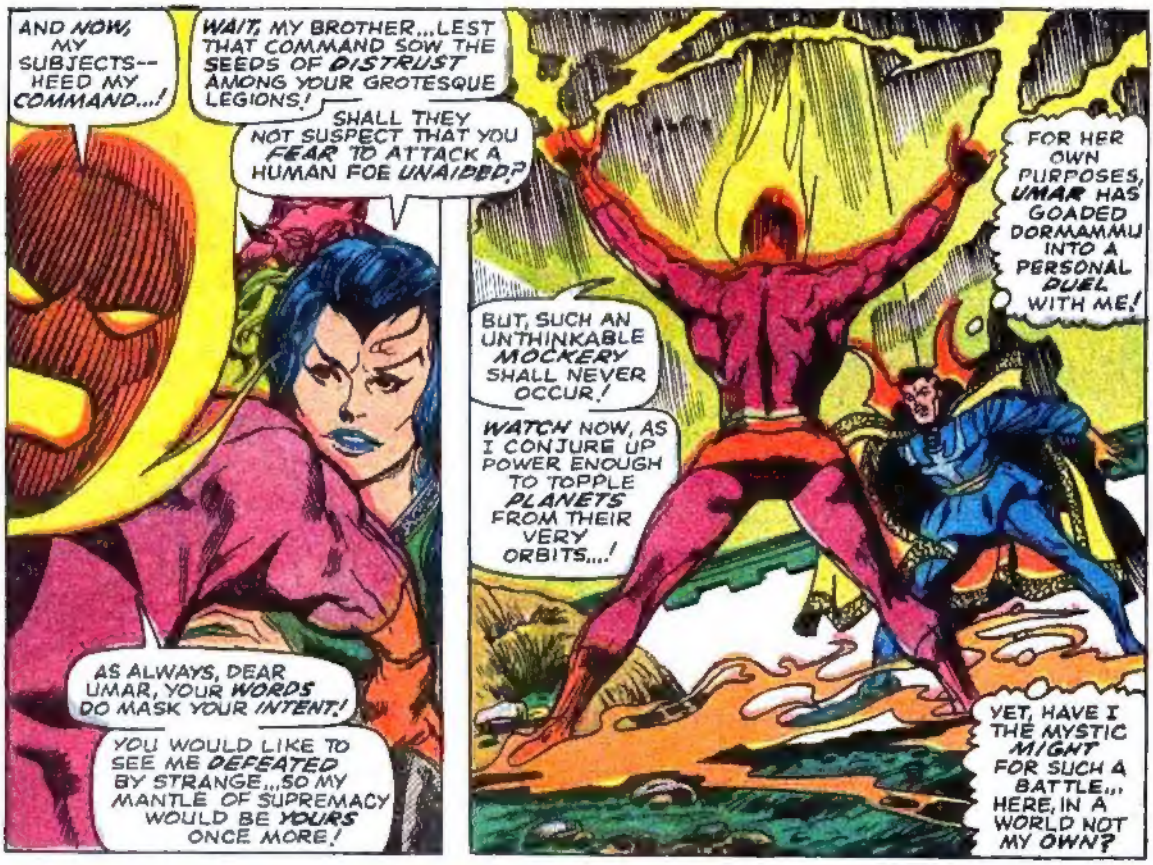
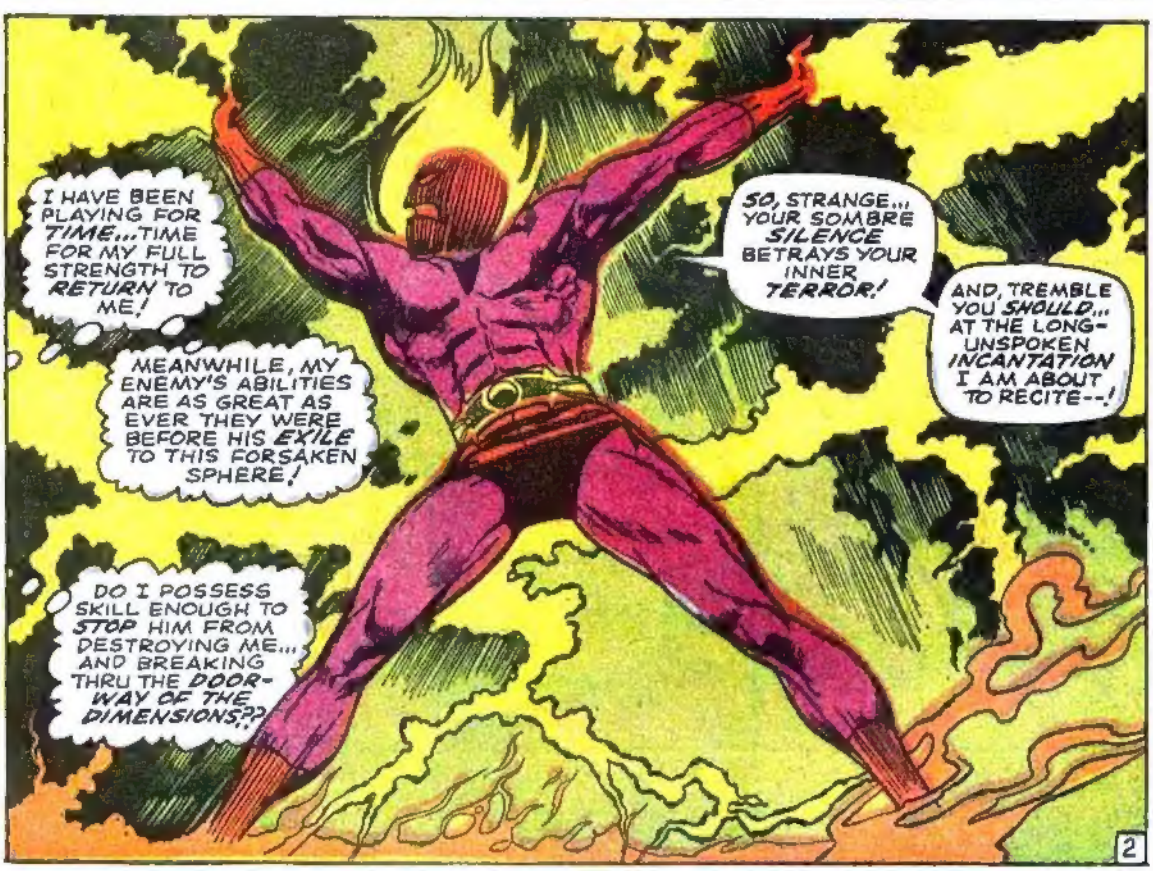
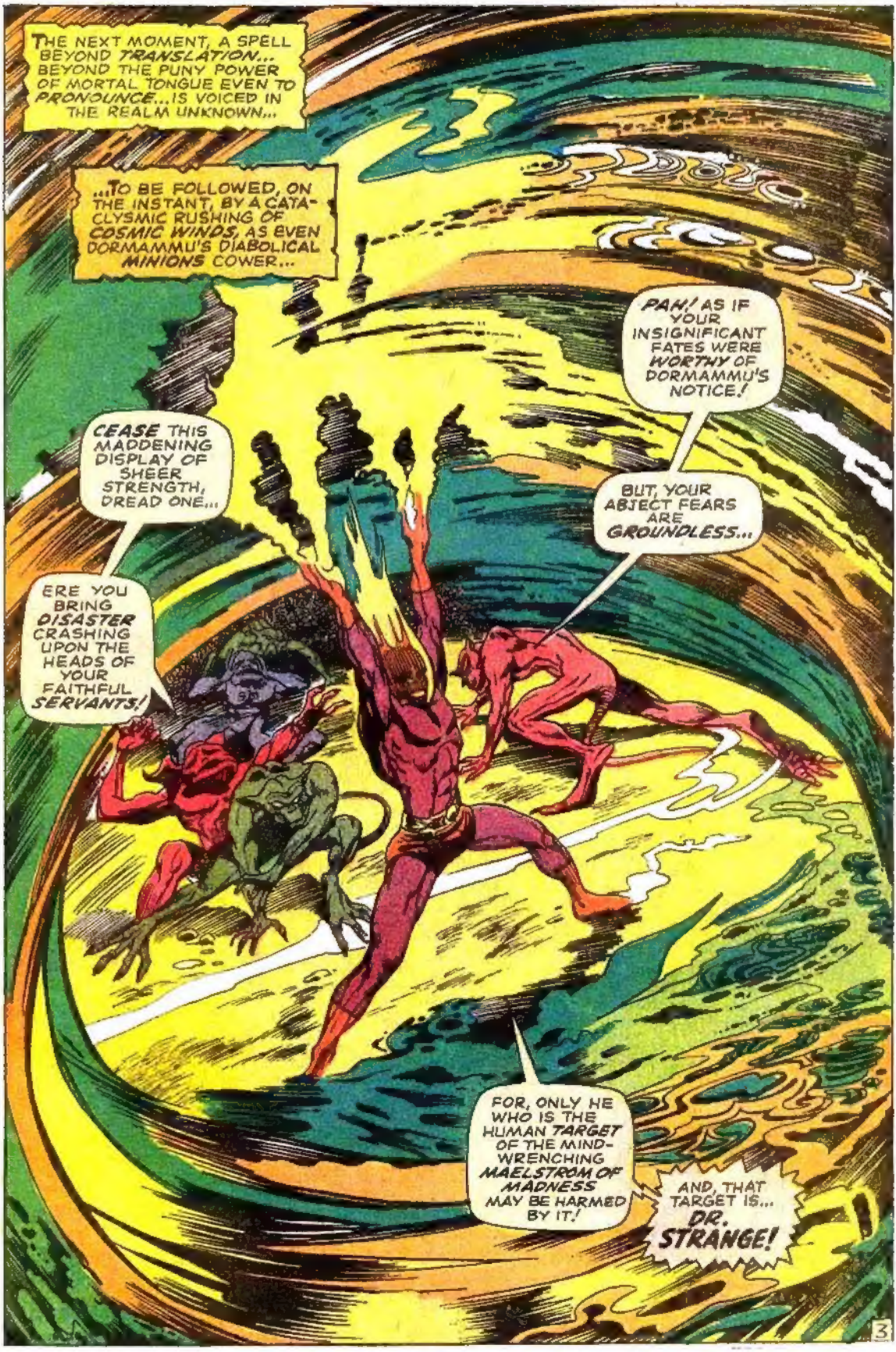
DORMAMMU LIVES!! --AND, IN ALL THE VAST, UNENDING COSMOS, THERE IS ONLY ONE WHO NOW STANDS BETWEEN THAT DREAD ENTITY AND AN UNSUSPECTING EARTH... THERE IS NONE BUT DR. STRANGE, MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS, TO CHALLENGE THE MOST DEMONIACAL OF FOES--
"...WHILE A WORLD AWAITS!"
BACK, FIENDISH ONE... BACK TO THE MURKY CAVERNS WHICH ARE NOW YOUR SOLE DOMAIN!
NEVER SHALL YOU PASS THRU THESE GLEAMING PORTALS INTO THE REALM OF MEN...
NOT WHILE DR. STRANGE YET ENDURES!
NAH! YOUR PITIFUL HEROICS HIDE THE GLINT OF IRONY, MORTAL!
HOW LONG DO YOU SUPPOSE YOU COULD SURVIVE THE ONSLAUGHT OF MY SUBHUMAN HORDES?
A SINGLE GESTURE FROM DORMAMMU... AND THEY WOULD REND YOU LIMB FROM LIMB--!
STAN LEE
SCRUTINIZES AND SUPERVISES A SECOND SPELL-BINDING SAGA BY:
ROY THOMAS
WRITER
and
GENE COLAN
ARTIST
INKED BY: TOM PALMER
LETTERED BY: ARTIE SIMEK


AND NOW, MY SUBJECTS--HEED MY COMMAND...!
WAIT, MY BROTHER...LEST THAT COMMAND SOW THE SEEDS OF DISTRUST AMONG YOUR GROTESQUE LEGIONS!
SHALL THEY NOT SUSPECT THAT YOU FEAR TO ATTACK A HUMAN FOE UNAIDED?
AS ALWAYS, DEAR UMAR, YOUR WORDS DO MASK YOUR INTENT!
YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ME DEFEATED BY STRANGE...SO MY MANTLE OF SUPREMACY WOULD BE YOURS ONCE MORE!
FOR HER OWN PURPOSES, UMAR HAS GOADED DORMAMMU INTO A PERSONAL DUEL WITH ME!
BUT, SUCH AN UNTHINKABLE MOCKERY SHALL NEVER OCCUR!
WATCH NOW, AS I CONJURE UP POWER ENOUGH TO TOPPLE PLANETS FROM THEIR VERY ORBITS...!
YET, HAVE I THE MYSTIC MIGHT FOR SUCH A BATTLE... HERE, IN A WORLD NOT MY OWN?


I HAVE BEEN PLAYING FOR TIME...TIME FOR MY FULL STRENGTH TO RETURN TO ME!
MEANWHILE, MY ENEMY'S ABILITIES ARE AS GREAT AS EVER THEY WERE BEFORE HIS EXILE TO THIS FORSAKEN SPHERE!
DO I POSSESS SKILL ENOUGH TO STOP HIM FROM DESTROYING ME... AND BREAKING THRU THE DOORWAY OF THE DIMENSIONS??
SO, STRANGE... YOUR SOMBRE SILENCE BETRAYS YOUR INNER TERROR!
AND, TREMBLE YOU SHOULD... AT THE LONG-UNSPOKEN INCANTATION I AM ABOUT TO RECITE--!


THE NEXT MOMENT, A SPELL BEYOND TRANSLATION... BEYOND THE PUNY POWER OF MORTAL TONGUE EVEN TO PRONOUNCE...IS VOICED IN THE REALM UNKNOWN...
...TO BE FOLLOWED, ON THE INSTANT, BY A CATACLYSMIC RUSHING OF COSMIC WINDS, AS EVEN DORMAMMU'S DIABOLICAL MINIONS COWER...
PAH! AS IF YOUR INSIGNIFICANT FATES WERE WORTHY OF DORMAMMU'S NOTICE!
CEASE THIS MADDENING DISPLAY OF SHEER STRENGTH, DREAD ONE...
BUT, YOUR ABJECT FEARS ARE GROUNDLESS...
ERE YOU BRING DISASTER CRASHING UPON THE HEADS OF YOUR FAITHFUL SERVANTS!
FOR, ONLY HE WHO IS THE HUMAN TARGET OF THE MIND-WRENCHING MAELSTROM OF MADNESS MAY BE HARMED BY IT!
AND, THAT TARGET IS... DR. STRANGE!
3

DORMAMMU SPEAKS THE TRUTH!
FOR, IN THIS DIMENSION, IT IS HE WHO WIELDS THE POWER SUPREME!
YET, I MUST RESIST HIS SPELL...OR FACE THE MOST HORRIFYING FATE OF ALL!
BUT, MAY ONE LONE SAPLING STAND UPRIGHT IN THE DESERT, AGAINST WINDS OF HURRICANE FORCE?--AND, MAY ONE LONE SORCERER... NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL... HOPE TO PREVAIL AGAINST A FOE WHO IS MASTER OF AN ENTIRE DIMENSION??
I SURROUNDED MYSELF WITH A PSYCHIC SHIELD...
BUT, STILL I AM BUFFETED ABOUT...AS IF I WERE A MERE STRAW IN A WHIRLPOOL!
AND, NOT FOR NOTHING IS THIS KNOWN AS...THE MAELSTROM OF MADNESS!
FOR, AS THE MYSTIC CURRENTS SWIRL FASTER...EVER FASTER...
MY REASON...MY VERY SANITY...SEEMS TO FADE FROM MY OUTSTRETCHED GRASP--!
I MUST ACT QUICKLY...
...OR ELSE BE DOOMED FOREVER TO THE LIVING DEATH OF... UTTER LUNACY!
IN THE NAME OF THE ALL-SEEING-- IN THE NAME OF THE ALL-FREEING--
LET THE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE NOW FREE ME FROM THIS MADDENING, MERCILESS VERTIGO!!
4.

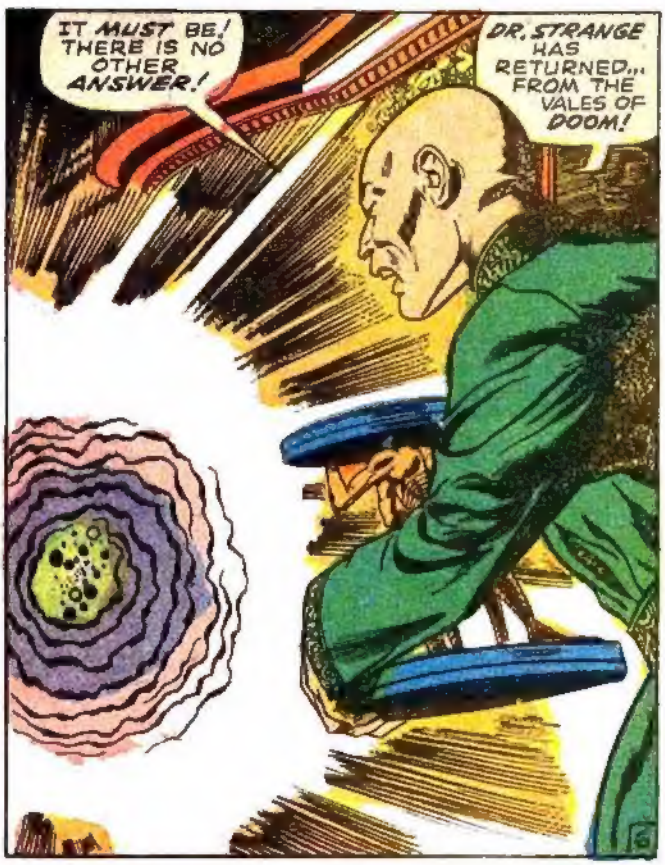
THEN, AS A SOUND WHICH IS NOT A SOUND FILLS THE ATMOSPHERE,,THERE SUDDENLY ERUPT TONGUES OF LIQUID FIRE... OF FLAME THAT DOES NOT BURN--
THE MAELSTROM IS GONE...VANQUISHED BY THE ONE SPELL THAT MIGHT HAVE SAVED ME!
BUT, WHY DOES DORMAMMU NOT ATTACK ANEW... BEFORE I CAN CONJURE UP A MYSTIC DEFENSE...?
AND, JUST IN CASE THERE BE ANY NON-BELIEVERS WHO QUESTION IN THE SELF-SAME MANNER...
I OVER-EXPENDED MY POWER ...TO CREATE THE NOW-VANISHED MALESTROM!
BUT, DORMAMMU SHALL YET TRIUMPH!
WILL YOU, DREAD ONE,? WILL YOU?
OR HAS THE MORTAL SHOWN THAT--EVEN HERE--HE IS YOUR EQUAL??
WHAT? YOU DARE VOICE SUCH THOUGHTS,?
FOR THAT, BE YOU CONSIGNED TO OBLIVION WITHOUT END!
THUS SHALL I DEAL ALSO WITH DR. STRANGE--
--BEFORE HE HAS REGAINED POWER ENOUGH TO DO AUGHT AGAINST ME!
YET, EVEN AS THE VERY ETHER RESTORES DORMAMMU'S MYSTIC MIGHT, WE MUST AVERT OUR EYES ELSEWHERE...
--TO A NAMELESS VOID BETWEEN WORLDS, WHERE HURTLE TWO ALL-BUT-HELPLESS FEMALE FORMS...
I CAN SENSE ...THAT WE ARE ABOUT TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THIS COSMOS...AND THE EARTH!
BUT, VICTORIA'S MYSTIC SKILLS ARE MERELY DORMANT... AND I ALONE HAVE NOT THE POWER TO PROTECT US!
HOW WILL WE SURVIVE THE TERRIBLE, MIND-WRENCHING TRANSITION--?
5.

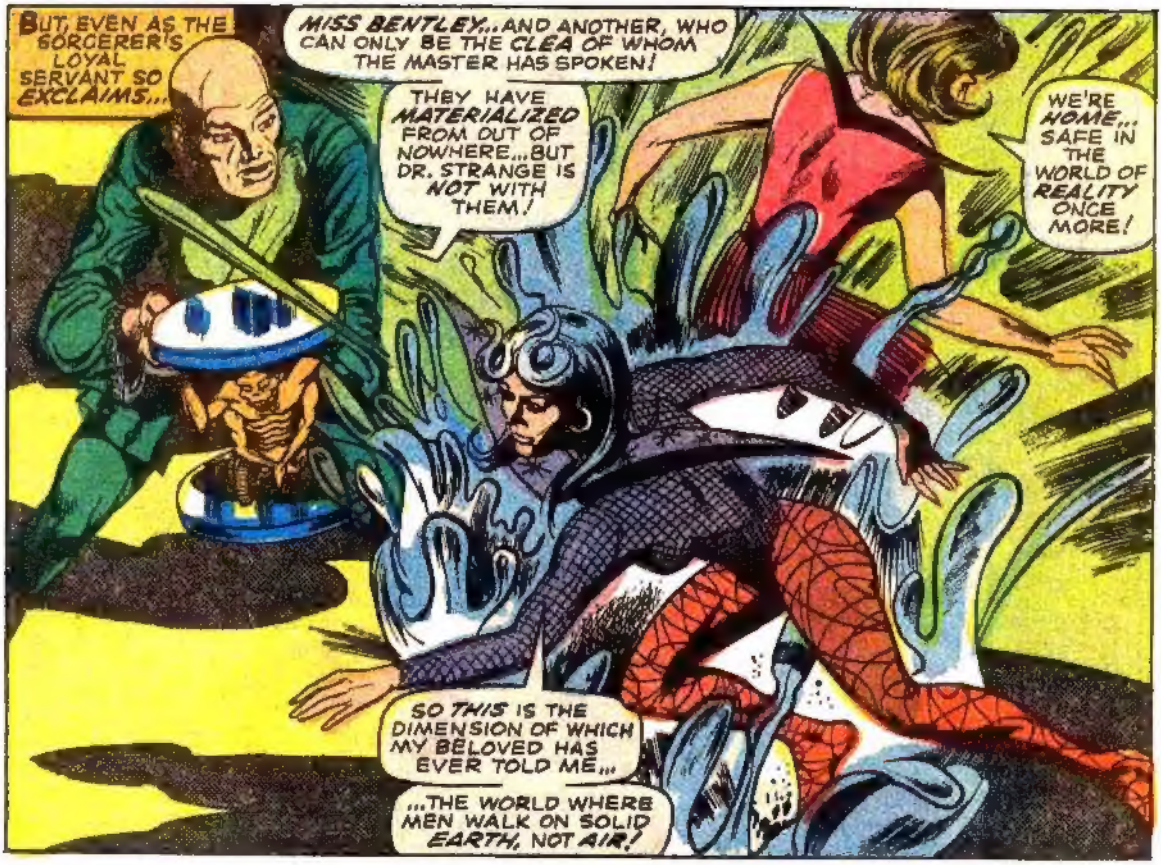
NEXT, WITH THE STUNNING SPEED OF THOUGHT ITSELF--
EVEN AS I VOICED THE WORDS, BUBBLES OF MYSTIC FORCE APPEARED AROUND US...TO PROTECT US!
ONLY DR. STRANGE COULD HAVE SO PROVIDED!
IS IT ANY WONDER THAT THE HEART OF CLEA FOREVER BELONGS TO HIM ALONE?

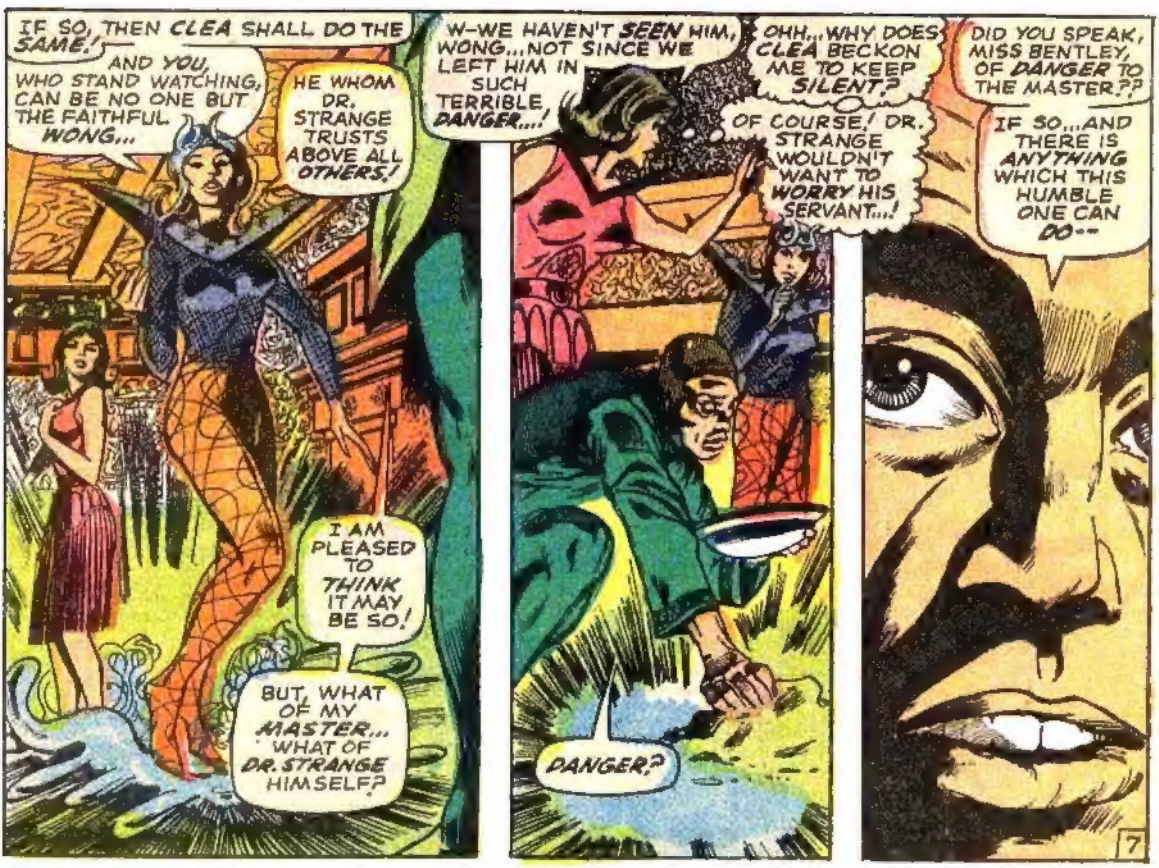
WHILE, IN THE OTHER MAGICAL GLOBULE...
I SEE NOW THAT THE ONE I LOVE CAN NEVER BE MINE...
FOR, WHAT COMPETITION CAN ONE WHOSE POWERS ARE MERELY LATENT, BE FOR A GIRL FROM ANOTHER UNIVERSE?

YET, EVEN THAT IS NOT SO IMPORTANT ...NOW!
NOT AS LONG AS DR. STRANGE MAY BE FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE, AT THIS VERY MOMENT!
IF ANY-THING SHOULD HAPPEN TO HIM, HOW COULD I GO ON LIVING--?

JUST THEN, IN THE EARTHBOUND SPHERE OF MORTALS, IN THE GREEN-WICH VILLAGE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF STEPHEN STRANGE...
THE AIR AROUND ME...IT SEEMS SUDDENLY CHARGED WITH BRILLIANCE!
COULD IT BE THAT THE MASTER HAS ALREADY COMPLETED HIS ARCANE MISSION?


IT MUST BE! THERE IS NO OTHER ANSWER!
DR. STRANGE HAS RETURNED... FROM THE VALES OF DOOM!


BUT, EVEN AS THE SORCERER'S LOYAL SERVANT SO EXCLAIMS...
MISS BENTLEY...AND ANOTHER, WHO CAN ONLY BE THE CLEA OF WHOM THE MASTER HAS SPOKEN!
THEY HAVE MATERIALIZED FROM OUT OF NOWHERE...BUT DR. STRANGE IS NOT WITH THEM!
WE'RE HOME... SAFE IN THE WORLD OF REALITY ONCE MORE!
SO THIS IS THE DIMENSION OF WHICH MY BELOVED HAS EVER TOLD ME...
...THE WORLD WHERE MEN WALK ON SOLID EARTH, NOT AIR!


IF SO, THEN CLEA SHALL DO THE SAME!
AND YOU, WHO STAND WATCHING, CAN BE NO ONE BUT THE FAITHFUL WONG...
HE WHOM DR. STRANGE TRUSTS ABOVE ALL OTHERS!
I AM PLEASED TO THINK IT MAY BE SO!
BUT, WHAT OF MY MASTER... WHAT OF DR. STRANGE HIMSELF?
W-WE HAVEN'T SEEN HIM, WONG...NOT SINCE WE LEFT HIM IN SUCH TERRIBLE DANGER...!
DANGER?
OHH...WHY DOES CLEA BECKON ME TO KEEP SILENT?
OF COURSE! DR. STRANGE WOULDN'T WANT TO WORRY HIS SERVANT...!
DID YOU SPEAK, MISS BENTLEY, OF DANGER TO THE MASTER??
IF SO...AND THERE IS ANYTHING WHICH THIS HUMBLE ONE CAN DO--

YET, WHY DOES MY HEART TAKE WING WITH FOOLISH WORDS?
HE, HIMSELF, HAS CHOSEN THE PERILOUS PATH HE TREADS...AND NONE MAY WALK IT FOR HIM.!
ESPECIALLY NOT ONE WHO HAS NO MYSTICAL POWERS.!
DO NOT DESPISE YOURSELF FOR WEAKNESS, WONG!
WE...WHO HAVE SUCH POWERS... ARE AS HELPLESS AS YOU--!
WHAT IS THAT?
NOK!
NOK!
SOME CALLER AT OUR DOOR, FAIR ONE!
BUT, WHO COULD IT BE, IN SUCH AN HOUR OF DREAD??
I THOUGHT NOT, SINCE I'VE BEEN WATCHING FROM ACROSS THE STREET SINCE DUSK.!
HE PUSHED RIGHT PAST ME, BEFORE--
BUT, NOW THAT I'M HERE...I'LL WAIT FOR HIM, NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES.!
MAY I ASK YOUR NAME, SIR... AND THE NATURE OF YOUR BUSINESS?
AS I HAVE SAID, IT MAY BE HOURS--!
THAT DOESN'T MATTER... NOW THAT I'VE FINALLY FOUND HIM.!

OPEN UP!
OPEN UP IN THERE, I SAY!
SLAM!
GOOD EVENING, SIR! MAY THIS POOR PERSONAGE ASSIST YOU?
YOU CAN...IF DR. STEPHEN STRANGE REALLY LIVES HERE!
AND, I CAN TELL BY YOUR EXPRESSION... THAT HE DOES.!
YES, SIR.! BUT, HE IS NOT HERE AT PRESENT--!

STILL, YOU'RE RIGHT, MY FRIEND...I OWE YOU AN EXPLANATION.!
MY NAME IS BENTON...DR. CHARLES BENTON ...AND I WAS ONCE A COLLEAGUE OF YOUR EMPLOYER, STEPHEN STRANGE.!*
BUT, THAT WAS WHEN HE WAS A REAL DOCTOR... A BRILLIANT SURGEON...
NOT THE GAUDILY-DRESSED CHARLATAN THAT HE HAS SINCE BECOME.!
*SEE DOC'S ORIGIN, IN ISH #169, FOR DETAILS! --SPARSE STAN.

CHARLATAN, DR. BENTON?
YES, YOUNG LADY... FOR, I KNOW HE PRETENDS SOME KNOWLEDGE OF OCCULT ARTS... OF SO-CALLED BLACK MAGIC!
HIS WHOLE LIFE SEEMS TO BE ONE GIGANTIC PUT-ON... A GROTESQUE MASQUERADE!
YOUR OWN ATTIRE MERELY BEARS ME OUT!
NO OFFENSE, OF COURSE!

AND THIS HOUSE... A CRUMBLING RELIC WHICH THE AUTHORITIES ONCE TRIED TO CONDEMN... IS THE FINAL PROOF POSITIVE!
ITS VERY WALLS SEEM TO REEK OF THE STAGNATION WHICH HAS BESET STRANGE SINCE HE GAVE UP THE MEDICAL PROFESSION!
TRUE, I KNOW THAT HIS HANDS WERE DAMAGED, SO THAT HE CAN NEVER OPERATE AGAIN!
BUT, I'VE TRACKED HIM DOWN TO OFFER HIM A NEW POSITION... AS A CONSULTANT!
NOR SHALL I LEAVE... UNTIL I'VE PERSUADED HIM TO COME WITH ME!

YET, ALL THRU THE PERIPATETIC SURGEON'S SOLILOQUY, THE THOUGHTS OF HIS CAPTIVE AUDIENCE ARE ELSEWHERE...
IF ONLY WE KNEW IF THE MASTER WAS YET ALIVE!
BUT, WE CAN NEVER KNOW, UNTIL HE RETURNS ONCE MORE!
AND WHEN THAT HOUR SHALL BE... NO MAN CAN SAY!

BUT WE, ALAS, HAVE NEITHER THE FAITHFUL WONG'S TIME NOR HIS PATIENCE... AND SO, LET US JOURNEY AT ONCE THRU THE NOW-VANISHING VORTEX WHICH TRANSPORTED CLEA AND VICTORIA TO EARTH...
...TO THE CLIME WHICH IS CALLED ONLY --THE REALM UNKNOWN--

...TO WHERE DR. STRANGE DOES, INDEED, BATTLE FOR HIS VERY EXISTENCE...!
SO, HATED ONE...YOUR VAUNTED MYSTIC POWERS BEGIN TO, RETURN!
GOOD... FOR NOW IT SHALL PLEASE ME MORE TO SLAY YOU!
HE HURLS SOME NEW SINISTER SPELL AT ME... WHILE I'M STILL RECOVERING FROM HIS LAST!
THE VERY ATMOSPHERE CONJEALS AT HIS GESTURE... BUT INTO WHAT FORM??

THE NEXT INSTANT, A STUNNED SORCERER HAS HIS UNWELCOME ANSWER...
CHAINS...THEIR LIVING LINKS COMPOSED OF SHEER, COURSING ENERGY!
THERE ARE MANY...FAR TOO MANY FOR MY STILL-WEAKENED POWERS TO COMBAT!

AND NOW... THEY HAVE UTTERLY ENWRAPPED ME!
AM I DOOMED TO DIE THUS... IN A DISMAL DIMENSION OF SHADOWS?
YES, DIE I SHALL... UNLESS--
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FOR A LONG, AGONIZING MOMENT, THE THOUGHTS OF STEPHEN STRANGE SEEM FAR AWAY, INDEED...AND THEN...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT SIMPLETON'S SCHEME CROSSED YOUR DESPERATE MIND, MORTAL...
BUT, IT IS FOREDOOMED TO FAILURE... AS I MYSTICALLY TIGHTEN YOUR COILS ABOUT YOU!
PERHAPS...MY VICTORIOUS FOE SPEAKS...THE TRUTH!
FOR, WITH EACH PASSING INSTANT, I BECOME... EVER WEAKER!
ERE LONG, DOCTOR STRANGE ...SHALL BE FOREVER CRUSHED!
YET, I DARE NOT DESPAIR...CANNOT SURRENDER HOPE...!
NOT WHILE THE FATE OF EARTH...OF ALL THE DIMENSIONS... LIES AT STAKE!
BUT... CAN'T TAKE... MUCH MORE...!
HAH! HE IS FINISHED!
AND, AS HE FALLS ...SO SHALL HIS WORLD!
DORMAMMU...I KNOW THAT YOU GO NOW TO INVADE THE MORTAL'S UNIVERSE!
YET, WHAT OF ME...WHAT OF YOUR FAITHFUL SISTER?
YOU SHALL REMAIN HERE, UMAR ...FOR I WOULD HAVE NONE SHARE MY HOUR OF GLORY!
AND, I KNOW THAT, IN THIS NETHER REGION, YOUR POWERS ALONE ARE NOT SUFFICIENT EVEN TO BETRAY ME!
NOW COME, MY MURDEROUS MINIONS -- FOLLOW IN THE PATHS OF THE DREAD ONE!
AN ENTIRE WORLD LIES OURS FOR THE TAMING!
AND TAKE IT WE SHALL!!!
11

HOW I DESPISE MY OVERBEARING BROTHER... AND WISH I COULD THWART HIM SOMEHOW!
BUT, HIS IS NOW THE POWER, AND THERE IS NO WAY--
AND YET...
I SEEM TO SENSE ...SOME SILENT INNER VOICE...
...TELLING ME TO FREE DR. STRANGE ...THAT HE MAY BE THE INSTRUMENT OF MY REVENGE!
THAT WOULD I GLADLY DO...IF I BUT HAD THE MYSTIC MIGHT!
STILL, WHY THIS UNCANNY FEELING WHICH NOW BESETS ME...
...MAKES ME FEEL THAT I HAVE THE POWER TO UNDO THE SPELL OF DORMAMMU??
LOOK, CLEA...OUR PLAN IS WORKING!
THE ONE CALLED UMAR IS READY TO DO OUR BIDDING!
NOT OUR BIDDING, VICTORIA...BUT HER OWN SELFISH DESIRES!
WE COULD MERELY PLANT THE SUGGESTION IN HER MIND... THRU THE AWESOME ORB OF AGAMOTTO!
AND, IN DOING THAT, WE MERELY FOLLOWED A MENTAL COMMAND FROM DR. STRANGE!
BUT NOW... BEHOLD! WHAT SINISTER GESTURE DOES UMAR MAKE?
'TIS THE BEGINNING OF A SPELL WHICH MAY SOON UNSHACKLE OUR CAPTIVE MAGE, MORTAL!
LAY YOUR HANDS UPON THE GLEAMING ORB... THAT OUR POWERS MAY BE ADDED TO UMAR'S OWN!
BUT, MY MYSTIC POWERS ARE ALL DORMANT... UNUSED, UNTRAINED...!
THAT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE!
UMAR'S SPELL SHALL STILL ABSORB THEM... THOUGH SHE HERSELF WILL NEVER KNOW IT!
NOW, QUICKLY--!
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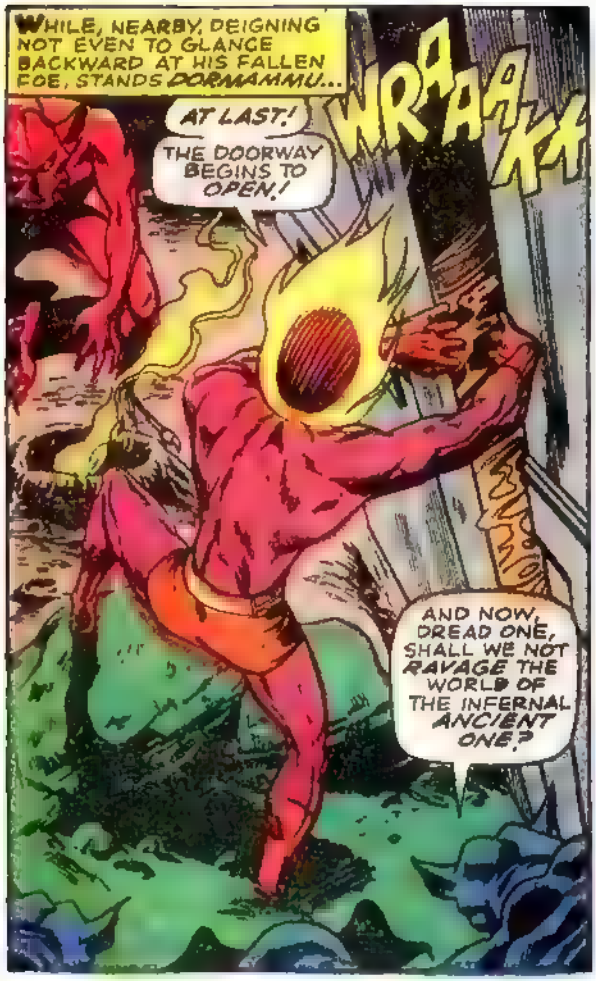
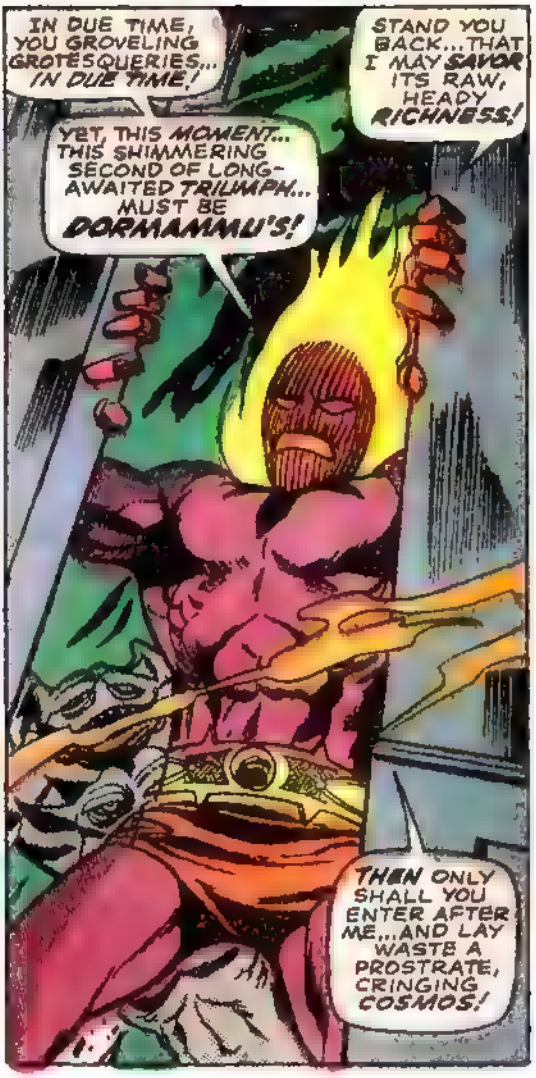
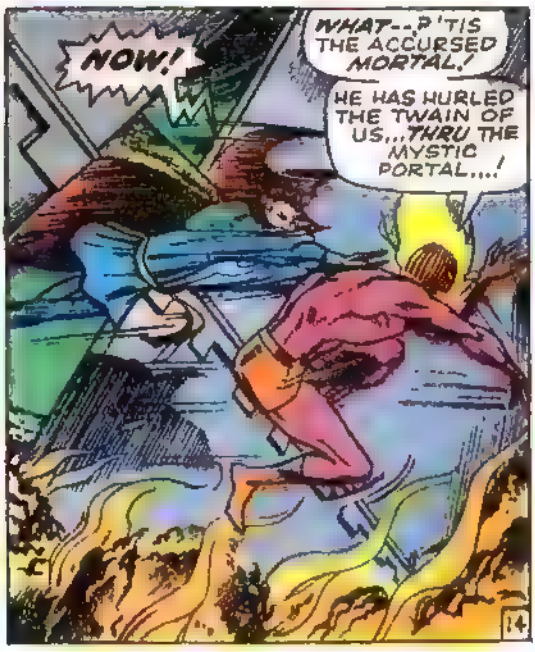
AND, THE NEXT MOMENT, EVEN AS A PUZZLED VICTORIA BENTLEY COMPLIES, A SUDDEN CRACKLING AS OF SOME PRIMORDIAL LIFE-FORCE SEEMS TO MAKE TWO UNIVERSES SHUDDER...
I CAN FEEL MY DEPLETED POWERS RETURNING... REPLENISHED FROM SOME SECRET SOURCE!
BUT, THAT DOES NOT CONCERN ME NOW!
'TIS VENGEANCE WHICH I SEEK... AND VENGEANCE THAT I SHALL HAVE!!
HEAR ME, O LORDS OF THE TEMPESTS... OF COSMIC THUNDER...!
BY ALL THE MIGHT THAT ONCE WAS MINE IN THE DARK DIMENSION-- LET DR. STRANGE NOW BE FREED!
THEN, SUDDENLY, EVEN AS UMAR'S FINAL SYLLABLE FADES INTO NOTHINGNESS...
MY BONDS HAVE BURST ASUNDER... AS I PRAYED THEY WOULD!
THEN, THE DESPERATE MESSAGE I SENT TO ANOTHER SPHERE... REACHED ITS GOAL!
BUT, MY BATTLE IS YET TO WIN!
DORMAMMU MUST BE DEFEATED... BY THE ONLY FORCE WHICH HAS THE POWER...!
13

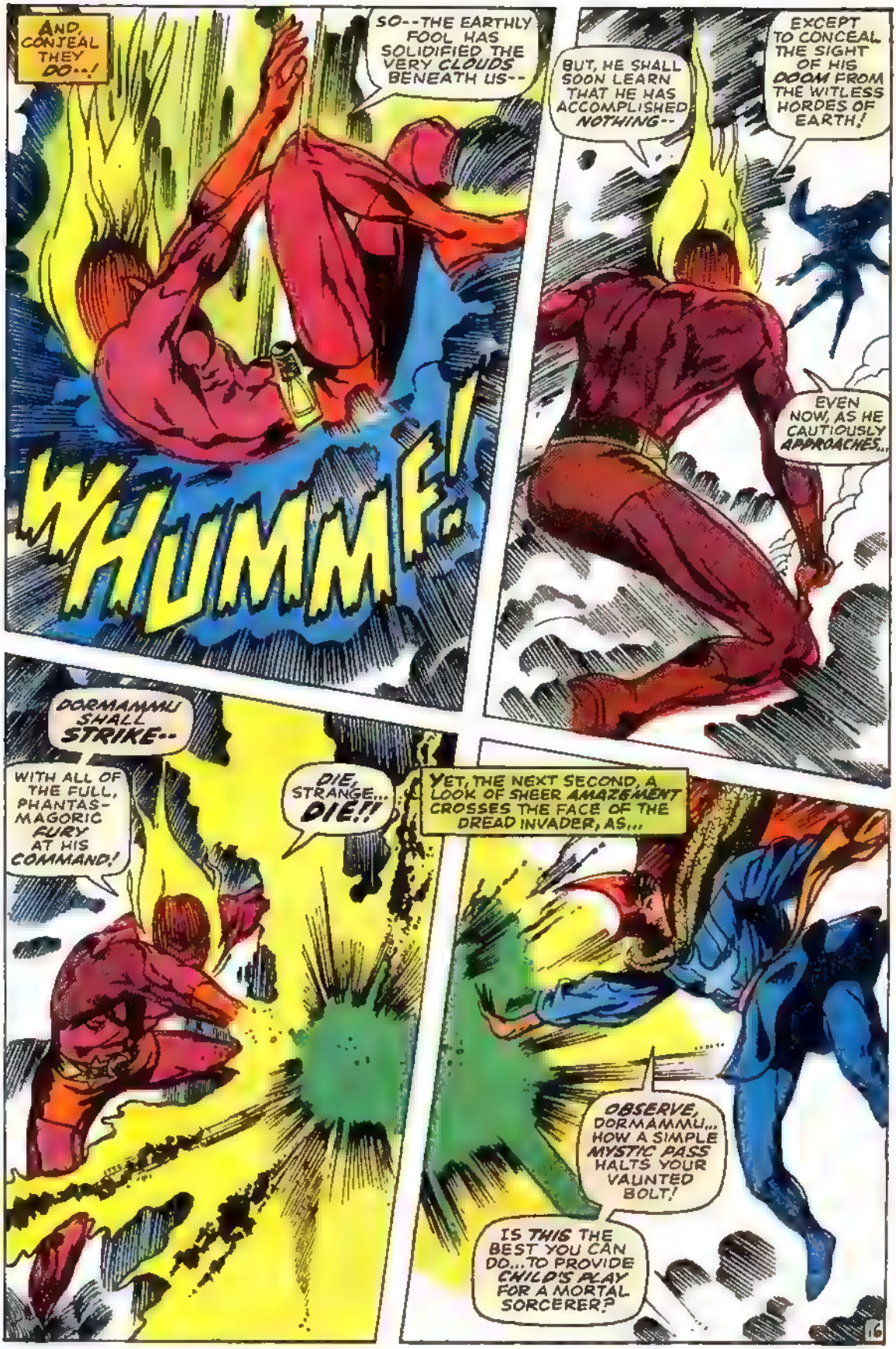

WHILE, NEARBY, DEIGNING NOT EVEN TO GLANCE BACKWARD AT HIS FALLEN FOE, STANDS DORMAMMU...
WRAAAAK
AT LAST! THE DOORWAY BEGINS TO OPEN!
AND NOW, DREAD ONE, SHALL WE NOT RAVAGE THE WORLD OF THE INFERNAL ANCIENT ONE?


IN DUE TIME, YOU GROVELING GROTESQUERIES... IN DUE TIME!
STAND YOU BACK... THAT I MAY SAVOR ITS RAW, HEADY RICHNESS!
YET, THIS MOMENT... THIS SHIMMERING SECOND OF LONG-AWAITED TRIUMPH... MUST BE DORMAMMU'S!
THEN ONLY SHALL YOU ENTER AFTER ME... AND LAY WASTE A PROSTRATE, CRINGING COSMOS!

AT THAT INSTANT, A GRIM, GAUNT FIGURE APPROACHES THE BLOOD-CHILLING TABLEAU ...A FIGURE TO WHOM ALL ARE MOMENTARILY OBLIVIOUS...
IN A TRICE, DORMAMMU SHALL ENTER THE EARTH-DIMENSION... AND SIGNAL HIS DEMONIAC HORDES TO FOLLOW!
IF THAT HAPPENS... ALL SHALL BE LOST!
THUS, THE TIME TO STRIKE MUST BE--


NOW!
WHAT--? 'TIS THE ACCURSED MORTAL!
HE HAS HURLED THE TWAIN OF US... THRU THE MYSTIC PORTAL...!

AY, BLASPHEMOUS SCHEMER...THRU A DOORWAY WHICH CLOSES BEHIND US, EVEN AS WE HURTLE GROUNDWARD!
FOR, ONLY YOUR POWER HELD IT OPEN...AND NOW THAT POWER IS REMOVED!
THEN, THOUGH I GAINED ENTRANCE TO THE EARTH-DIMENSION... MY FIENDISH SUBJECTS REMAIN ENTRAPPED!
BEWARE, STRANGE...FOR DORMAMMU NEEDS NO LACKEYS TO DEAL WITH YOU!
...I MUST SET THE SKYBORNE STAGE FOR THE MOST FATEFUL MYSTIC DUEL OF ALL!
AND SUCH IS THE SHEER MYSTIC STRENGTH OF DORMAMMU ...THAT HE MAY BE RIGHT!
BUT, WHATEVER MAY BEFALL, IT MUST NOT BE WITNESSED BY THE UNCOMPREHENDING MASSES BELOW!
THUS, EVEN AS MY CLOAK OF LEVITATION BREAKS MY HEADLONG FALL...
BY THE VAPORS OF GREAT VALTORR, WHICH DO ALL THINGS CONCEAL...
BY THE PROWESS OF MY MENTOR... NOW LET THE CLOUDS CONTEAL!!


AND, CONJEAL THEY DO--!
SO--THE EARTHLY FOOL HAS SOLIDIFIED THE VERY CLOUDS BENEATH US--
WHUMMF!
BUT, HE SHALL SOON LEARN THAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING--
EXCEPT TO CONCEAL THE SIGHT OF HIS DOOM FROM THE WITLESS HORDES OF EARTH!
EVEN NOW, AS HE CAUTIOUSLY APPROACHES...
DORMAMMU SHALL STRIKE--
WITH ALL OF THE FULL, PHANTASMAGORIC FURY AT HIS COMMAND!
DIE, STRANGE... DIE!!
YET, THE NEXT SECOND, A LOOK OF SHEER AMAZEMENT CROSSES THE FACE OF THE DREAD INVADER, AS...
OBSERVE, DORMAMMU... HOW A SIMPLE MYSTIC PASS HALTS YOUR VAUNTED BOLT!
IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN DO... TO PROVIDE CHILD'S PLAY FOR A MORTAL SORCERER?

AND, WHILE THE STUNNED DORMAMMU WRITHES IN UNABATED RAGE, THE ELEMENTS THEMSELVES SEEM TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE HIDDEN BATTLE...
THAT LIGHTNING-BOLT...IT ALMOST HIT THE PAN-AM BUILDING!
I REMEMBER STORIES FROM WHEN I WAS A KID... ABOUT HOW THESE SUDDEN STORMS MEAN THAT TWO GIANTS ARE FIGHTING!
4219
AND, WHEN THEY COME UP THIS SUDDENLY...I'M ALMOST READY TO BELIEVE IT!
WHILE, IN THE CLOUD-ENSHROUDED HEAVENS ABOVE...
VENT YOUR WRATH AS YOU WILL, INTERLOPER!
YOU SHALL QUICKLY FIND THAT HERE, 'TIS DR. STRANGE WHO IS THE POWER--
--NOT DORMAMMU!
NOW HE HURLS THE MOLECULES OF THE AIR AGAINST ME...IN SHIMMERING, STEEL-HARD PELLETS!
--EVEN AS I EMPLOYED THE ETHER OF THE REALM UNKNOWN TO DEFEAT HIM!
BACK...EVER BACK, THE GRIM, INHUMAN FOE IS DRIVEN--AS HIS VOICE RISES IN A CRESCENDO OF WRATHFUL FRUSTRATION...
THIS CANNOT BE!
IT IS A MOCKERY OF THAT WHICH HAS BEEN TRUE SINCE TIME OUT OF MIND!
THERE IS NO POWER...NAY, NOT IN ALL THE UNIVERSES...THAT CAN SO HUMBLE THE DREAD DORMAMMU--!
17

NOT ALL THE DOLEFUL DEMONS OF DENAK...NOT THE SUPREME SATANNISH HIMSELF...COULD SO BUFFET THE MASTER OF THE DARK DIMENSION!
VERILY, THOUGH IT DRAINS ME OF THE LAST OF MY ONCE-LIMITLESS POWER...
--LET THIS BEDEVILING BOMBARDMENT CEASE!
YOUR FINAL, DESPERATE SPELL SUCCEEDED, USURPER!
BUT, IT LEFT YOU WEAKENED ...YOUR MYSTIC STRENGTH DEPLETED!
AND STILL YOU DO NOT SEE THE TRUTH...
...THAT THE ENEMY WHO ACTUALLY DEFEATED YOU...WAS YOURSELF!!
MYSELF? WHAT MADNESS DO YOU NOW SPEAK?
NAY, EVIL ONE...THE VERY ANTITHESIS OF MADNESS!
IN DAYS PAST, YOU DID UTTER A SACRED VOW... NEVER TO ENTER THE EARTH-DIMENSION!
WHEN YOU SHATTERED THAT VOW... YOU BROUGHT YOUR OWN LONG-FORGOTTEN CURSE UPON YOUR HEAD!
AND NOW, LET THE WHIRLING WINDS OF WATOOMB RISE FROM THE NETHER REGIONS... TO CARRY YOU BACK FROM WHENCE YOU CAME!
THAT RUSH OF AIR... SPINNING ME ABOUT LIKE A FALLEN LEAF...
MUST... FIGHT BACK! I MUST--!

WHILE, IN THE STORM-STRUCK CITY BELOW...
FIRST LIGHTNING ...NOW THIS AWFUL WIND!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WEATHER, ANYWAY?
JUST GRIN AND BEAR IT, HONEY!
I'M SURE THERE'S A LOGICAL, SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION FOR ALL THIS...!
IT IS...NO USE!
FOR THE FIRST AND ONLY TIME... A MORTAL HAS DEFEATED THE DREAD DORMAMMU!
--BY USING THE BINDING, IRRESISTIBLE POWER OF MY OWN UNDYING SPELL!
HE'S VANISHING ...THRU A HOLE IN THE SKY ITSELF!
YOU'VE SAVED YOUR WORTHLESS WORLD FOR A FLEETING MOMENT--
BUT, ON THE INSTANT THAT YOU RELAX YOUR GUARD...I SHALL STRIKE ANEW...!
BUT, AT LEAST I CAN NOW RETURN TO THE DARK DIMENSION...
NOR SHALL I BE ABLE TO STOP HIM!
...WHERE I HELD SWAY BEFORE MY BATTLE WITH ETERNITY!
WHEN HE RENOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO REMAIN IN A WORLD HE HAD VOWED NOT TO ENTER--
NOT ALL MY POWER...NOT ALL MY WONDROUS WIZARDRY... COULD KEEP HIM HERE!
EVEN AS HE SPEAKS THUS, MY HOLD UPON HIM BEGINS TO DIMINISH--!
PERHAPS I COULD HAVE HELD HIM... SHACKLED HIM IN CHAINS OF LIMITLESS FORCE...
IF ONLY I WERE NOT SO WEARY... FROM OUR FEARSOME STRUGGLE!
BUT, HE IS GONE...AND I MUST BE CONTENT...
...YET, EVER ON MY GUARD, FOR DORMAMMU SHALL NEVER REST TILL HE HAS DRUNK DEEP FROM THE CUP OF VENGEANCE!
THEN, AS A GLOBULE OF ANTI-MATTER CARRIES THE MYSTIC MAGE TOWARDS HIS RETREAT, SHIELDING HIM FROM PRYING EYES...

...IT CARRIES HIM TOWARDS A DIFFERENT, BUT QUITE REAL THREAT...
BY THE MOONS OF MUNNOPOR!
SOME UNBELIEVER HAS INVADED MY SANCTUM SANCTORUM!
AND, I HAD BECOME VISIBLE BEFORE I NOTICED!
EH? DR. STRANGE ...AT LAST!
BUT, HE SEEMS TO BE COMING THRU THE WALL...IN SOME SORT OF TRANSPARENT BUBBLE...!
DR. BENTON...ONE OF MY MEDICAL COLLEAGUES FROM TIME PAST!
FORGIVE ME... FOR NOT RECOGNIZING YOU AT ONCE!
PLEASE LET ME EXPLAIN... ABOUT MY UNORTHODOX ENTRANCE...!
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY!
I'M FAMILIAR WITH YOUR REPUTATION AS A MASTER OF ILLUSION ...AND MASS HYPNOSIS!
IN FACT, I'M HERE TO INDUCE YOU TO GIVE UP THIS SENSELESS CHICANERY...THIS USELESS EXISTENCE...
...AND BECOME MY CONSULTANT!
THEN, YOU CAN BE OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY AGAIN!
OF SERVICE... TO HUMANITY?
YOU MUST EXCUSE ME... DR. BENTON! I'M...QUITE TIRED!
PERHAPS ...SOME OTHER TIME...
BAH! I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN I WAS WASTING MY BREATH!
AS A SURGEON, YOU WERE GREED PERSONIFIED... AND NOW, YOU'RE PLAYING WIZARD OF OZ!
YOU'LL NEVER BE OF USE TO ANYONE!
SLAM!
AND, AS THE STACCATO BEAT OF FOOTFALLS RECEDES INTO THE DAWN, THERE STANDS ALONE THE FIGURE OF THE SORCERER SUPREME...
...THE MATCHLESS MORTAL WHOSE SPELLS CAN CONQUER ANY FOE...BUT HIS OWN INESCAPABLE LONELINESS...!